



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

YEMENI SIBLINGS CHARGED IN VISA FRAUD SCHEME *Pair unlawfully entered U.S by attempting to become new “family”*

FRESNO, Calif. - A brother and sister, Yemeni nationals living in Bakersfield, appeared in federal court here today to face charges of illegally entering the United States by pretending to be a married couple with a sick child in desperate need of medical treatment available only in the U.S.

Abdulraqueeb Ahmed Abdo Rageh, 27, and Fathehia Abdo Mohammed Ahmed, 26, are charged on two counts of conspiracy and visa fraud. They were arrested without incident at their home by Bakersfield U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

The ICE investigation into the siblings began last May with the assistance of the Fraud Prevention Unit from the U.S. Embassy in Yemen and the Diplomatic Security Service. After being denied visas by the U.S. Embassy in Yemen, they paid \$23,000 to a “visa broker” for new identities and appropriate supporting papers including birth certificates and passports with new names and birthdates, a marriage license, and documents for a very sick child they could claim as their own.

When the siblings were once again denied visas as a new “family”, they obtained letters from various medical doctors affirming that the infant was in urgent need of pre-paid and pre-arranged specialized medical care in the U.S. for encephalitis. After finally receiving the visas, the siblings entered the U.S. in May, 2001 without the “sick” infant.

“The unconscionable greed of those behind this scheme not only compromised the integrity of our legal immigration system, but led to the exploitation of others – including a child,” said David Marin, ICE resident agent-in-charge for investigations in Bakersfield. “ICE is determined to target the criminals behind these schemes and anyone who profits from them.”

The siblings are due back in federal court on March 25 for a bail status hearing. The defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. If convicted, they could face a maximum 5-years in prison and or \$250,000 fine for Conspiracy, and a maximum 10 years in prison and or 250,000 fine for Fraud and Misuse of Visas and Aiding and Abetting.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.